

PSYCHOLOGICAL CORRELATES OF ANGER AND AGGRESSIVENESS IN SPORT COMPETITION: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY WITH YOUNG PORTUGUESE SOCCER ATHLETES

Topic: Positive and negative emotions

Authors: Rui Sofia, José Fernando Cruz, Manuela Amaral, Luís Meireles & Hugo Veiga

Institution: University of Minho, School of Psychology, Portugal

Presenting author: Rui Sofia

Email contact: ruisofia@gmail.com

The study of athlete's emotional experiences has always been a long-lasting focus of interest in sports literature. Despite a vast amount of studies focused on competitive anxiety, the study of anger has remained sparse. Anger has been shown to be one of the most experienced emotions in sports competition. Besides, research has pointed out several psychological variables that appear to be associated with this emotion, namely, threat appraisals, competitive anxiety, and goal orientations among others (e.g., Lazarus, 2000; Skinner & Brewer, 2004; Robazza & Bortoli, 2007; Woodman et al., 2009).

Objectives: The purpose of the present research studies was to explore the relationships between competitive anger and aggressiveness, and other cognitive and motivational correlates in order to deepen our knowledge of their role and impact in sport competition.

Method: More specifically, the links of sport-specific anger and aggressiveness with self-control, competitive anxiety, goal orientations, core self-evaluations, and threat and challenge appraisals in sport competition were explored in two different studies. In study 1, participants were 100 young male athletes (aged between 14 and 18 years old) competing in the major national junior soccer league. In study 2, participants were 65 athletes competing in a regional league (aged between 14 and 18 years old).

Results: Preliminary results showed significant associations between competitive anger and aggressiveness and the other psychological constructs. Such results also indicate that self-control and threat appraisal in sport competition emerge in both samples and studies as significant and major predictors of anger.

Conclusions: Results are discussed considering their theoretical contributions and paths for future research on the correlates of anger and aggressiveness in competitive sport. Particularly, the future study of the links between anger and aggressiveness and previous unexplored variables in sport competition (e. g., self-control, threat and challenge appraisals, core self-evaluations) will be addressed. Practical and applied implications for the design of psychological interventions with young athletes will also be suggested. Overall, preliminary results indicate the advantages of combining cognitive, motivational, and emotional individual differences toward a better understanding of the nature and functions of anger and aggressive behaviours, as well as their effects in sports performance.